MHR Connections

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 12 Number 1 January 2012

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

# Commission launches Facebook Page

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is hoping you will "like" it when it launches its Facebook page on Monday February 13, 2012.

"Visiting social media sites such as Facebook is really more like having a conversation, and for that reason alone the Commission thinks it is a great way to communicate," says Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

One of the first things the Commission wants to talk about on its Facebook page is its annual youth conferences, which will be taking place in April.

The Commission is inviting younger students to the 2012 conferences and is looking at the many ways of getting the word out. This year, for the first time, the Commission is inviting students in grades 7 to 9. (See story page 2 **Y Rights Conference looks to younger students**.) In previous years, high school students participated in the human rights youth conferences.

The Facebook page will not only feature youth conference updates and human rights projects, it will also highlight dates of historical human rights events, news and videos made here in Manitoba and around the world.

"Although the page will initially focus on youth, there will be lots of postings of interest to any age group," says Ms Scarth, adding that the goals of the Commission are to connect people who have similar human rights interests and provide relevant information to teachers, students and the general public.

For those who are not familiar with Facebook, the wall is where it all happens. This is where you put comments, videos, photos and questions. You'll see what your friends are posting on their wall, and anyone on your friends list can come by and write a comment on your wall. So the Facebook wall is a great place to get conversations started.

So feel free to "like us" on the Manitoba Human Rights Facebook page.

THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

### The Rights Connection
### by Jerry Woods, Chairperson
### An invitation

It is said that the evolution of human rights is a journey. The question becomes, are we getting closer to the destination?

On behalf of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, it is my great pleasure to invite you to participate in this year's annual conference of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA), in Winnipeg, Manitoba June 17 – 19, 2012.

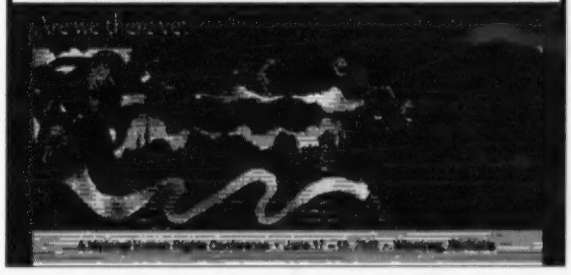
Through plenary and panel sessions, this national conference will examine the human rights we have inherited or recently gained, while asking the question "Are we there yet?"

Topics include social and economic rights, systemic discrimination, bullying and harassment and accommodating mental health issues. Among the many confirmed speakers are Stuart Murray, Kevin Chief and Cindy Blackstock. We are also pleased to present Dr. Samantha Nutt as our keynote speaker, as well as an engaging plenary session on human rights and the social media.

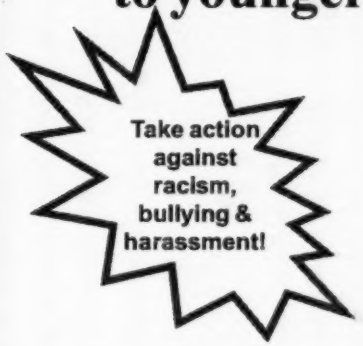
I am also pleased to announce that our closing reception will be at the beautiful historic residence of the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, Government House. This event will be hosted by The Honourable Philip S. Lee, C.M., O.M. Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, who is a vocal supporter of human rights.

The CASHRA 2012 Conference Website is in the works and will be launched in early February. Please take a look at the program once the website is launched and I am sure you will see something of interest to you.

I encourage you, whether you represent the private or public sector, community organizations or CASHRA to attend, and I look forward to seeing you at Winnipeg's Meeting Place, The Forks.



# Y Rights Conference looks to younger students

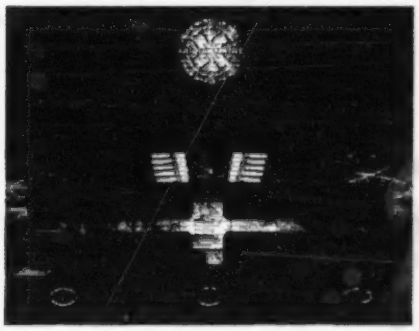



For the past ten years the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has hosted annual youth conferences for senior students. Things, however, are about to change.

"Teachers have often told us that students in the middle years would enjoy and benefit from our conferences and we have listened," says Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Commission. As a result, for the first time the engaging and highly interactive youth conferences will be offered to students in grades 7, 8 and 9.

According to Ms Scarth, younger students are becoming more engaged in human rights than ever before and are involved in many human rights projects.

The *Y Rights Conference* will reflect that growing involvement and the popular workshops are either being re-designed for a younger audience or new ones are being planned.



New this year is the game *Million Dollar Rights Race*. All the questions deal with human rights and the students have the same choices as the contestants on the TV game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*: ask the audience, 50:50 and phone a friend.

The *Y Rights Conference* is being held in mid April in both Shilo and Winnipeg.

Before the conferences, a pilot project will take place at River Heights School in Winnipeg. In February the new and revised workshops will be delivered to the grade seven students. "The Commission was approached by teachers at River Heights School giving us the perfect opportunity to pilot our new workshops," says Ms. Scarth.

Y Rights Conference

**SAVE THE DATE**

**The Manitoba Human Rights Commission invites students and teachers to the Y Rights Conference**

**Shilo - April 17, 2012**

**or**

**Winnipeg - April 19, 2012**

**Each school can send up to six students & a supervisor**

# Government of Canada strikes down mandatory retirement

*Major Human Rights Victory for Canada's Aging Population*

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission joins the Canadian Human Rights Commission in welcoming the Government of Canada's decisive action in moving to repeal sections of the Canadian Human Rights Act and Canada Labour Code that permit employers to force employees to retire once they reach a certain age, regardless of their ability to do the job.

"We're not born with date stamps saying our fitness for work expires at 65," says David Langtry, Acting Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. "Age discrimination is discrimination, pure and simple," he adds.

The repeal of the mandatory retirement provisions in Canadian law was contained in the Budget Implementation Act, which has now received Royal Assent.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has called for repeal of the mandatory retirement provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act since 1979.

All Canadian jurisdictions, including Manitoba, with the exception of the federal jurisdiction and New Brunswick, have abolished mandatory retirement. Many federally regulated employers as well as the federal public service abolished it on their own initiative. To date there has been no evidence of any significant detrimental impact on employers, pensions, safety, or job progression.

For more than twenty-five years, Manitoba has viewed mandatory retirement as a form of age discrimination.

"If your workplace falls under provincial jurisdiction and you live in Manitoba, retirement is not based solely on chronological age, but rather on the concept of ability," says Jerry Woods, Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners, adding that other than a few legislated exceptions such as universities or under very specific circumstances, if you meet the requirements and conditions of the job, you can continue to be part of the workforce.

As Canada's boomer generation ages, more and more people want to continue to work past retirement age, whether for personal or financial reasons.

## Winnipeg Celebrates 30th Anniversary of Black History Month

In Winnipeg, the Annual Black History Month Celebration was launched by the local Chapter of the National Black Coalition of Canada in 1981. The honour and responsibility of organizing these events have passed through different organizations throughout the years. This year the Jamaican Association of Manitoba, Inc. is sponsoring the events.

The events are open to the public and everyone is welcome. For more information about the events during Black History Month please visit: http://bhmwinnipeg.blogspot.com/